
BLEACH: 黒炎の幻想編

The Black Flame Illusion Arc

(Carlos and the Awakening of Bankai: Kōkoku no Gensō — Shōmei Tamashii no Kage)

Episode 1: Shadows Stir in the Seireitei

The Seireitei rested beneath a moon half-hidden by clouds, the white stone walls of the great Soul Society glimmering faintly under the pale night. Though outwardly silent, the air carried tension—a disturbance that even the most ordinary Shinigami could feel pressing against their skin like invisible needles. The wind shifted strangely, carrying not the normal scent of sakura and stone, but something colder, distorted, like a reflection in a warped mirror.

In the First Division barracks, the Captains of the Gotei 13 gathered at the summons of Captain-Commander Shunsui Kyōraku. The wide tatami-floored hall, lit by lanterns, seemed unusually heavy. Even Kyōraku, normally relaxed and almost flippant in his bearing, sat straighter than usual. His straw hat cast a shadow across his eyes, though the gleam of sharpness within betrayed his levity.

Kyōraku (calmly, with a sip of sake): “I imagine you’ve all felt it by now. That pressure in the air that isn’t quite Hollow, nor Quincy, nor Arrancar... something caught between.”

A murmur spread through the room. Captain Hitsugaya narrowed his icy eyes, his tone clipped and suspicious.

Hitsugaya: “It’s fluctuating. Like a signal blinking in and out. But it’s strong—dangerously strong.”

The room grew quiet as Captain Unohana folded her hands, her serene face betraying nothing, though her voice carried a cutting weight.

Unohana: “This reiatsu does not belong to an intruder. It belongs to one of our own... Carlos.”

At that, murmurs erupted. A younger officer, known for his rough edges and blunt honesty, Carlos had not yet mastered his full power, but his spiritual energy had been unstable for weeks. The Captains had tolerated it—until now.

Kyōraku (grimly smiling): “If Carlos cannot find balance, his soul may fracture. And when that happens, it won’t just be him who suffers. The Seireitei itself could collapse into those illusions.”

The Captains’ silence was unanimous. A storm was coming, and its eye rested in one of their own.

Episode 2: The Cathedral of the Soul

In the quiet courtyard of his division, Carlos trained relentlessly, the clang of his blade against the air resounding in sharp rhythms. Sweat soaked his robes, but his eyes held a storm. His strikes were forceful, yet the reiatsu leaking from his sword came in unstable bursts—sometimes a blinding flash of light, other times a suffocating flood of darkness.

The voice of his Zanpakutō spirit echoed faintly from the steel, low and elusive.

Zanpakutō Spirit (whispering, like overlapping voices): “You wander the twilight between radiance and abyss. Do you fear the shadow that clings to you... or the light that exposes your truth?”

Carlos snarled, gripping the hilt tighter until his knuckles whitened.

Carlos: “Enough with riddles! If you are my Zanpakutō, then face me! Stop hiding in illusions!”

The courtyard around him shuddered. Space fractured as if reality itself was glass cracking under pressure. Carlos’s vision blurred, and in a single breath, the world collapsed around him. He was dragged inward, into the depths of his own soul.

He stood now inside his **inner world**—a vast cathedral of obsidian stone. Its windows were made of shattered stained glass, shards hanging impossibly in midair, glowing faintly with light that bent in unnatural colors. The floor was submerged ankle-deep in rippling black liquid, though faint beams of white light streamed down from above, battling with the shadows.

At the altar stood his Zanpakutō spirit: a towering armored figure clad in a robe split perfectly into halves—one white, one black. Its face was concealed by a mask that was half-illuminated, half dripping with endless shadows.

Spirit (voice layered, echoing as if from two mouths at once): “To wield me, you must embrace what you deny. Will you stand as the sovereign of illusions, or will you be devoured by them?”

Carlos clenched his fists. His chest heaved, but he did not step back.

Carlos: “I don’t want to rule illusions. I want the truth! Show me who you are!”

The cathedral groaned as the shadows stirred, the beginning of a trial he could not yet comprehend.

Episode 3: The Invasion of the Phantom Hollows

Before Carlos could answer his spirit’s challenge, alarms ripped through the Seireitei. The night sky trembled with the echo of the klaxons, a crimson flare launching into the heavens as Hell Butterflies scattered warnings across divisions.

Shinigami Messenger: “Unidentified entities breaching from the Dangai! All squads mobilize immediately!”

The Dangai—realm between worlds, dangerous even to seasoned Captains. From its rift poured a new breed of enemy: **Phantom Hollows**, born of corrupted souls trapped between existence and nothingness. Their bodies flickered like mirages, their movements distorted as though reality itself could not pin them down.

Rukia, Renji, and Hitsugaya were among the first to clash with them near the Western Gate. Blades sliced through distorted bodies, but the Hollows reformed instantly, reshaping like smoke given physical form.

Rukia (panting, frustrated): “They don’t stay dead!”

Renji (gritting teeth): “It’s like cutting fog—dammit!”

Then came the Hollow King—a towering figure clad in armor resembling broken glass, his mask cracked to reveal an endless void beneath. He spread his arms, unleashing a spiritual field that warped the entire battlefield into a surreal landscape. Buildings twisted at impossible angles, the ground split like a shattered mirror, and even time seemed to ripple.

As the Captains fought to contain the chaos, one reiatsu resonated uniquely with the distortion. From the shadows of the battlefield, Carlos stepped forward, drawn as if fate demanded it.

The Hollow King’s gaze locked onto him.

Hollow King (echoing like splintered bells): “You... you reek of the same illusions that birthed us. You are kin to the void between worlds.”

Carlos’s reiatsu flickered violently, surging between blinding white light and suffocating black flame. His blade trembled in his grip.

Carlos (angrily shouting): “I don’t know what you are, but I’ll cut you down all the same!”

The clash began, and the fate of his soul—and perhaps the Seireitei itself—was sealed.

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Episode 4: The Hollow King's Judgment

The battlefield twisted into a nightmare of reflections. The Seireitei's pristine walls now bent at impossible angles, stretching like rubber and collapsing back into jagged shards. Torii gates loomed overhead, broken and floating sideways, while the ground beneath the Shinigami cracked like shattered mirrors.

Renji's Zabimaru lashed through the air, striking at the Hollow King's chest, but the chain-blade dissolved through him like smoke. The enemy's body flickered, fragments of glass breaking away only to reassemble moments later.

Renji (frustrated): "Tch! He's not even solid—what the hell *is* this guy?!"

Beside him, Rukia cast *Some no mai, Tsukishiro*, the ground glowing with a circle of icy white light. For a second, the Hollow King's lower body froze in place. She clenched her teeth, willing the pillar of ice to erupt and shatter him—

—but his body fractured into a thousand shards of light and shadow, the ice imprisoning nothing but an empty shell.

Rukia (gasping, her breath visible in the frozen air): "An illusion...? Even my ice doesn't bind him?"

From behind, Hitsugaya surged forward, Hyōrinmaru gleaming with crystalline fury. His wings of ice unfurled, his spiritual pressure dropping the battlefield's temperature. With one slash, a dragon of ice roared forth, biting down on the Hollow King. The field erupted in a blizzard, blinding friend and foe alike.

For a moment, it seemed the Hollow King was pinned—

But when the storm cleared, the dragon was fractured, glass-like cracks spreading through it until the entire construct shattered into nothingness.

The Hollow King stepped forward unscathed, his voice ringing like shattered bells.

Hollow King: “Futile. Your reality has no weight in my dominion.”

The Shinigami staggered, their attacks meaningless. And then, without warning, the Hollow King turned—not to them, but to Carlos, whose unstable reiatsu flared across the battlefield.

Hollow King (pointing a fractured blade toward Carlos): “You. You are not whole. Your existence trembles between shadow and flame, between form and void. You are neither Shinigami nor Hollow. You are... kin.”

Carlos’s chest tightened. His blade shook in his grip, the steel humming with instability. The others looked at him in confusion, their eyes demanding answers he didn’t have.

Carlos (shouting back, defiant yet uncertain): “I’m nothing like you! Don’t compare me to—”

Before he could finish, the Hollow King lunged, his warped blade swinging in an arc that bent reality itself. Carlos raised his sword, but the impact hurled him back, tearing through the distorted battlefield until his body crashed against a twisted wall.

The blow echoed through his soul. His vision blurred. And suddenly, he wasn’t standing in the battlefield anymore.

Episode 5: Descent into the Cathedral

Darkness swallowed Carlos whole. When he opened his eyes, he was once again inside his **inner world**—the cathedral of obsidian and stained glass. But this time, it was collapsing. The stained-glass windows shattered one by one, the shards raining down into the black liquid that now rose to his knees. Each splash echoed like a funeral bell.

The Zanpakutō spirit stood at the altar, taller than before, its mask cracking apart to reveal a shifting face beneath—sometimes human, sometimes monstrous. Its robe billowed with shadows on one side, radiant light on the other.

Spirit (voice reverberating, like multiple echoes): “You cannot defeat him as you are. You swing your blade with fear, with denial, with half a soul.”

Carlos gritted his teeth, staggering to his feet.

Carlos: “Then give me your strength! If you’re my Zanpakutō, then stop holding back and fight with me!”

The spirit stepped forward, each stride shaking the cathedral. Its presence crushed down on Carlos like a tidal wave.

Spirit: “You ask for strength, yet you cannot even face the weight of yourself. Tell me, Carlos—what do you fear more? The brilliance of your own light... or the abyss of your shadow?”

Carlos’s hands trembled. Images flashed before his eyes—his failures in training, the countless battles where he’d relied on instinct but doubted himself after. He remembered the times he felt unworthy of his comrades’ trust, the whispers of being “unstable” or “dangerous.”

Yet alongside those memories came voices—Ichigo’s reckless courage, Rukia’s calm reassurance, Renji’s unyielding loyalty. They had all faced their fears, claimed their strength. Could he do any less?

Carlos raised his sword, his voice hoarse but firm.

Carlos: “I fear both... but I’ll carry both! My shadow, my light—they’re both mine. And I’ll make them one!”

The spirit paused. The mask cracked entirely, shattering into shards that dissolved into the air. From beneath emerged a face both luminous and dark, its eyes glowing with twin radiances.

Spirit (smiling faintly, as if finally satisfied): “Then at last... you are ready.”

The cathedral blazed with white fire and black shadow intertwining, the shattered windows reforming into radiant mosaics. Power surged into Carlos, flooding his veins with harmony instead of chaos.

The spirit extended its hand.

Spirit: “Speak my true name, and take the throne that awaits you.”

Episode 6: The Birth of Bankai

Carlos opened his eyes to the battlefield once more. His body still bled, his hands still shook—but his soul was no longer divided. He stood, his blade gleaming with new clarity.

The Hollow King loomed, raising his warped weapon for the final strike.

Hollow King (snarling): “Fall into nothingness, kin of illusions!”

But Carlos’s voice thundered across the broken field, cutting through the warping air.

Carlos: “Bankai... **Kōkoku no Gensō — Shōmei Tamashii no Kage!**”

(Bankai: Kingdom of Illusions — Shadow of the Illuminated Soul)

The battlefield exploded with power. His blade transformed into a massive double-edged greatsword, black on one side, white on the other, its surface shifting with living sigils. Behind him erupted a throne of obsidian and light, towering into the distorted sky. From it, waves of shadow spilled outward, coating the ground, while radiant beams of light descended, forming protective barriers around his allies.

The Hollow King staggered, his body glitching as if reality itself resisted his existence.

Hollow King (shaken, furious): “Impossible... you have turned illusion into dominion...!”

Carlos raised his greatsword, his eyes burning with twin flames of white and black.

Carlos: “No. I’ve accepted myself. Both light and shadow. And with that—I’ll end you.”

The battle for reality itself began anew.

Arc Structure (10+ Episodes)

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- **Ep 1: Shadows Stir in the Seireitei**
Captains sense Carlos’s unstable reiatsu. Tension begins.
- **Ep 2: The Cathedral of the Soul**
Carlos’s first real confrontation with his Zanpakutō spirit.
- **Ep 3: Invasion of the Phantom Hollows**
The Dangai breaches, Phantom Hollows attack. Hollow King appears.
- **Ep 4: The Hollow King’s Judgment**
Shinigami struggle; Hollow King singles out Carlos.

- **Ep 5: Descent into the Cathedral**
Carlos's inner world trial intensifies.
- **Ep 6: The Birth of Bankai**
Carlos awakens Bankai for the first time.
- **Ep 7: The Throne of Illusions**
Carlos battles Hollow King with new power, but loses control of Bankai's illusions—his allies are caught inside them.
- **Ep 8: The Burden of Kingship**
Rukia, Renji, and Hitsugaya are trapped in Carlos's illusion-world. Carlos must control his dominion or kill his comrades by accident.
- **Ep 9: Shadows at the Gate**
A second enemy emerges: the "Herald of the Void," a Hollow-born being who created the Phantom Hollows. The Hollow King was only his vanguard.
- **Ep 10: War for the Soul's Reality**
The Gotei 13 clash with the Herald's forces. Carlos struggles with his unstable Bankai, finally learning its ultimate technique.
- **Ep 11: Shōmei no Totsugeki (*Illuminated Charge*)**
Carlos fully harmonizes light and shadow, erases the Herald's distorted realm.
- **Ep 12: Resolution — and Foreshadowing**
Peace returns briefly, but the spirit of Carlos's Bankai warns him: every kingdom has enemies at its gates.

Now I'll continue with **Episodes 7 & 8** in full detail (long paragraphs, dialogue, battle scenes).

Episode 7: The Throne of Illusions

The Hollow King staggered as Carlos's Bankai spread its dominion across the battlefield. Shinigami stared wide-eyed at the transformation—the obsidian throne looming like a monument to another world, its shadows flowing like rivers across the ground, while rays of light bent downward like holy spears.

Renji's voice cracked with awe.

Renji: “What... what is this? His reiatsu—it’s bending the battlefield itself!”

Even Hitsugaya, always calm, looked unsettled as frost formed unintentionally around his body in response to the pressure.

Hitsugaya (thinking): “That’s not just Bankai. It’s a domain... Carlos is rewriting reality in his image.”

Carlos advanced, his greatsword gleaming with black-and-white fire. Each swing didn’t just cut—it distorted space itself, shattering the Hollow King’s illusions and replacing them with his own.

Carlos (roaring): “This is my Bankai! My soul made manifest! You can’t twist it anymore!”

The Hollow King recoiled, his body fracturing under the sheer weight of Carlos’s reiatsu. Yet as Carlos pressed forward, something unexpected happened. The shadows of his dominion stretched outward too far, curling not only around his enemy—but also around his allies.

Renji suddenly gasped, his vision warping. The battlefield dissolved. In its place, he stood in a barren wasteland of broken swords, endless and suffocating. Each blade was a failure, each one whispering his doubts.

Renji (clutching his head): “Wh—what is this?! These aren’t Hollows... this is me...”

Rukia’s world shifted into a frozen void, where endless versions of herself stood, each asking if she was strong enough, if she was worthy of being Byakuya’s sister, if she was anything beyond her failures.

Hitsugaya found himself trapped in an eternal blizzard, voices of the dead calling his name, accusing him of being too weak to save anyone.

The truth struck them all: they weren’t in the Hollow King’s illusions anymore. They were trapped inside **Carlos’s Bankai**.

Carlos froze mid-swing, his breath ragged as realization hit. His Bankai’s dominion wasn’t under his full control. His throne of illusions not only consumed the battlefield—it consumed the hearts of his allies as well.

Carlos (desperate, horrified): “No—no, I didn’t mean to—! Damn it... I’m dragging them into my world!”

The Hollow King laughed, fragments of glass falling from his form.

Hollow King: “So this is your kingdom? A throne built on lies, where even your friends drown in your shadows. You are no savior—you are a tyrant of illusions!”

Carlos gritted his teeth, torn between finishing the Hollow King or freeing his comrades. His hands trembled. His throne flickered. And for the first time since unleashing Bankai, fear clawed at his heart.

Episode 8: The Burden of Kingship

Carlos stumbled, clutching his greatsword, sweat dripping into his eyes. His allies writhed inside the illusion-worlds his Bankai had forged. He could hear their voices echoing in the distance, each cry of despair twisting his chest tighter.

Carlos (thinking, pained): “If I keep fighting, I’ll crush them under my power... but if I release Bankai, the Hollow King will devour us all...”

His Zanpakutō spirit’s voice whispered from within, heavy and solemn.

Spirit: “A throne is not just power. It is responsibility. If you claim dominion, you must bear its weight—not for yourself alone, but for every soul caught within your kingdom.”

Carlos fell to one knee, his vision doubling. His shadows lashed violently, nearly striking Renji. He gasped and pulled back, horror widening his eyes.

The Hollow King sneered, relishing the sight.

Hollow King: “Yes... drown in it. Your kingdom is a cage. Your light blinds. Your shadow suffocates. Your friends will perish because of your arrogance!”

The words cut deep—but then, faintly, through the distortion, Carlos heard Rukia’s voice. Calm. Steady. Unyielding.

Rukia (calling out, though trapped): “Carlos! Don’t let your power consume you. Remember—you’re not alone. A throne means nothing without the ones you protect!”

Renji’s voice followed, fierce and defiant even as his illusion tormented him.

Renji: “Idiot! If you give up now, I’ll beat you senseless when I get out! You’re stronger than this!”

And Hitsugaya, his voice cold but certain.

Hitsugaya: “Control it, Carlos. Master it. That’s what being a Shinigami means.”

Carlos's grip steadied. His allies weren't breaking—they were fighting inside his illusions, resisting, trusting him to pull them out. His fear began to transform into resolve.

He rose slowly, his reiatsu stabilizing, shadows no longer thrashing wildly but flowing like rivers under his command. The throne behind him pulsed, steadying.

Carlos (breathing deeply, steady voice): “You're right... I can't run from this. I can't fear my own power. A throne isn't chains—it's a vow. And I'll protect everyone within it.”

The shadows shifted, softening around his allies, no longer prisons but shields. Their illusions shattered, and Rukia, Renji, and Hitsugaya collapsed back into reality, breathing hard but alive.

The Hollow King recoiled, cracks spreading across his form as Carlos's dominion tightened around him.

Hollow King (snarling): “Impossible! No soul can bear such duality!”

Carlos raised his greatsword, his eyes burning with equal parts shadow and light. His voice thundered.

Carlos: “I can. Because both are me. My light, my shadow, my weakness, my strength. This kingdom... isn't yours to mock. It's mine to protect!”

The battlefield shook. For the first time, the Hollow King looked afraid.

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Episode 9: Shadows at the Gate

The Hollow King's fractured body crumbled under Carlos's dominion. With one final scream, shards of his existence scattered into dust, dissolving into the night sky. The battlefield fell silent.

Renji leaned on his sword, panting.

Renji: “Finally... it's over...”

But Unohana, who had arrived silently with her Division, frowned. Her voice was soft, but her words cut like a scalpel.

Unohana: “No... the reiatsu has not disappeared. It has... shifted.”

The ground shook. The distorted landscape of the battlefield cracked open, as though the Hollow King’s body had only been a shell. From the rift in reality, a new presence emerged—towering, cloaked in writhing shadows, its mask bearing no cracks but an endless abyss where eyes should have been.

His voice was smooth, cold, like silk over a blade.

Herald of the Void: “The King was only my pawn. I am the Herald. From the womb of the void I have come, to cleanse this world of false realities.”

Every Shinigami froze. His reiatsu dwarfed even the Hollow King’s. The very air split in jagged fractures, the Seireitei itself groaning under his existence.

Carlos’s hand trembled on his greatsword. His Bankai still flickered, unstable. His spirit whispered urgently.

Spirit: “Be wary. He is not illusion—he is the void itself, the source of the Phantom Hollows.”

The Herald extended a hand. Phantom Hollows erupted from the fractures, hundreds at once, swarming the battlefield.

Kyōraku appeared, his twin blades drawn, hat shadowing his eyes.

Kyōraku (grimly): “Looks like we’ve got ourselves another long night...”

The real war had just begun.

Episode 10: War for the Soul’s Reality

The battlefield became chaos. Phantom Hollows swarmed every corner, their warped bodies devouring reiatsu with each touch. Squad members screamed as their swords dissolved mid-swing.

Hitsugaya unleashed Hyōrinmaru in wide arcs, freezing entire waves in moments, though each Hollow shattered into mist and reformed seconds later.

Hitsugaya (furious): “They just won’t stay down!”

Rukia fought beside him, her blade gleaming with icy precision.

Rukia: “Their reiatsu is tied to the Herald! Unless he falls, they won’t end!”

Renji’s Zabimaru coiled like a serpent, scattering dozens, but even he was slowing, his body heavy under the constant drain of their touch.

Renji (gritting teeth): “Dammit—Carlos! We need you!”

Carlos stood at the center, his throne looming, shadows spilling like rivers across the broken ground. His allies were protected inside the glow of his dominion, but the Herald’s void pressed against it, eroding the borders like acid eating through steel.

Herald (calm, mocking): “Your kingdom is fragile. Shadows and light cannot coexist. You fight inevitability itself.”

Carlos’s chest heaved, his grip slipping. He fought to stabilize his Bankai, but every time his reiatsu surged, the throne cracked. His spirit whispered, sharper now, urgent.

Spirit: “You wield the throne, but not the crown. Until you bear it fully, your kingdom will fall.”

The Herald raised his hand, summoning a blade of nothingness, a weapon made of pure void. He pointed it at Carlos.

Herald: “I will erase your kingdom. And when it falls, your soul will be devoured first.”

The clash of sovereign powers was about to begin.

Episode 11: Shōmei no Totsugeki

The Herald descended, his void blade cutting through light and shadow alike. Carlos raised his greatsword, the impact shaking the battlefield. Sparks of white and black flame erupted, consuming everything in their path.

The Herald’s strength was overwhelming. Each strike ate away at Carlos’s dominion, collapsing portions of his throne into rubble. Illusions shattered, reality itself trembling under the clash.

Carlos staggered, his arms screaming in pain. He heard his allies shouting behind him, but their voices blurred. The Herald towered above, relentless.

Herald: “You cannot resist nothingness. All kingdoms fall. All light dies. All shadows fade. Return to the void.”

Carlos's knees buckled. His Bankai flickered. For a moment, despair clawed at him again.

But then, faintly, he heard not his spirit—but his comrades. Rukia's calm, Renji's fire, Hitsugaya's determination. Even Kyōraku's lazy grin. They weren't illusions. They were real. They were depending on him.

Carlos roared, planting his feet. His throne blazed with renewed power, both shadows and light pulsing as one. His spirit's voice returned—not a whisper, but a command.

Spirit: "Now, Carlos. Claim the crown. Command your kingdom. Strike as sovereign!"

Carlos's reiatsu erupted, the battlefield engulfed in a tidal wave of light-shadow harmony. He raised his blade high, calling forth the ultimate technique of his Bankai.

Carlos (voice shaking the heavens): "Kōkoku no Gensō: **Shōmei no Totsugeki!**"
(*Illusion Kingdom: Charge of the Illuminated*)

The throne split apart, unleashing countless shadowed knights and radiant guardians, manifestations of Carlos's soul. They charged as one, colliding with the Herald's void.

The clash was apocalyptic. Reality itself tore, sky splitting, the Seireitei trembling to its foundations. Light and shadow crashed against emptiness, a storm swallowing the battlefield whole.

When the dust cleared, Carlos stood panting, his greatsword still glowing. The Herald staggered, his body fractured, his void blade broken in half.

For the first time, the Herald of the Void looked uncertain.

Herald (low, disbelieving): "...Impossible... to master both light and shadow... no soul should..."

Carlos raised his blade again, his eyes blazing.

Carlos: "I told you. Both are me. And I'll protect everyone within my kingdom—even if it means shattering yours."

With one final strike, the Herald's body broke apart, consumed in a storm of radiant shadow.

Episode 12: Resolution — and Foreshadowing

Silence fell. The Phantom Hollows dissolved like smoke, their existence tied to the Herald's destruction. The fractures in reality closed, the distorted battlefield settling back into the familiar walls and streets of the Seireitei.

Shinigami collapsed to the ground, exhausted but alive. Renji groaned, dragging himself upright.

Renji (grinning weakly): "Heh... you actually pulled it off, Carlos. Not bad."

Rukia stepped forward, her eyes steady but softened.

Rukia: "You accepted both sides of yourself. That's strength most people can't find."

Hitsugaya gave a small nod, his tone cool but respectful.

Hitsugaya: "You're still rough. But with a power like that... you may actually be worth relying on."

Carlos sheathed his greatsword, his Bankai dissolving into motes of shadow and light. For the first time, his reiatsu felt calm—whole. He looked up at the sky, the moon no longer fractured.

Kyōraku approached, his hat tilted down, but a grin tugging at his lips.

Kyōraku: "Well, well... another monster joins the roster. Guess I'll have to keep an eye on you, eh, Carlos?"

Carlos chuckled, though his chest still burned.

Carlos: "Monster or not... I'll carry this power. For everyone."

The arc could have ended there—in triumph, in relief. But as Carlos turned away, a final whisper echoed in his soul, the voice of his Zanpakutō spirit, deeper and heavier than before.

Spirit: "You have opened the Kingdom of Illusions. But every kingdom, once built, draws enemies to its gates. Prepare yourself... sovereign."

Carlos froze, his eyes narrowing at the night sky. For though the Herald was gone, the war for the soul's reality had only just begun.

The screen faded to black.

[ARC END]
